

Eduard Steves House
509 King William Street
San Antonio, Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-3150

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TEX-3150
Page 1

EDUARD STEVES HOUSE

San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

ADDRESS: 509 King William Street
OWNER: San Antonio Conservation Society
OCCUPANT: Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Rucker, Caretakers
USE: Meetings, teas and other entertainments; open
to the public for a nominal fee.
ARCHITECT & BUILDER: Mr. John Kampmann, Architect
Mr. Anthony Earhart, Contractor and Mason

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Eduard Steves founded a family prominent in San Antonio building, financial and social circles. The house is an excellent example of lavish Mansard Victorian domestic architecture of the 1870's, when the early settlers began to prosper after their early hardships.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Eduard Johann Steves was born in Elberfeld, Germany, in 1829. He came to Texas with his father, brothers and sisters in 1848, who first settled in the neighboring newly founded German colony of New Braunfels. He learned the cabinet making trade and divided his time between carpentering in San Antonio and farming near Comfort, another neighboring pioneer German settlement, in the 1850's. In 1857, he married Johanna Kloepper and made his home in Comfort. Shortly thereafter, however, the couple moved to San Antonio and made their home in a house on Blum and Bonham Streets.

HABS
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15. SANT
25.

TEX-3150
Page 2

By 1874, Mr. Steves had become a prosperous lumberman, and joined the other wealthy German families by building a large house on King William Street to take care of his growing family. Upon his death in 1890, his widow, Johanna, lived there with her youngest son, Ernest, until her death in 1930. Ernest died a few months later. Johanna Steves willed the house to seven nieces and nephews, and the house was rented until 1958, when ownership of the property was transferred to Mrs. Curtis (Edna Steves) Vaughan, who deeded it to the San Antonio Conservation Society.

Alterations and Additions: Many changes and minor additions have been made in and to the house with the change in living habits. A breakfast room was added on the southwest side, opening off the dining room. Columns have been added under cantilevered overhanging roof at the rear second floor deck, and a part of this area has been screened. A bath has been added on each floor, and there have been minor changes in doors and windows. The house stands, however, substantially as originally built. The service wing now houses an apartment for the caretaker.

REFERENCES

- Alluring San Antonio, by Lillie Mae Hagner, pp. 65-66, published by the Naylor Press in 1940.
San Antonio, by Charles Ramsdell, pp. 157-158, published by the University of Texas Press in 1959.
San Antonio Conservation Society 1962-63 Yearbook.
History of the Steves House, by Mrs. Brentano Harnisch, in the files of the San Antonio Conservation Society.
Old pictures of the house, taken shortly after its completion, now hang on the wall in the first floor stair hall.
Bexar County Deed Records, Vol X 1, p. 177.
Bexar County Probate Records, 1890.
Bexar County Deed Records, Vol 1188, p. 591.
Bexar County Deed Records, Vol 1687, pp. 550-551.
Bexar County Deed Records, Vol 4119, p. 497.
Mrs. Edward Steves, 531 King William Street, San Antonio, Texas

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Character: Mansarded Victorian, two-story and attic, L-shaped plan, with porch across front and along the inner sides of L at the rear.

Condition of Fabric: Good; being occupied, cared for, and used.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: 50' wide by 55' deep, L-shaped, 6'-0" wide front porch and rear porch.

Foundations: Natural limestone, continuous. Stone piers under porches.

Wall Construction: Smooth-cut, beveled edge, native limestone, 13" thick, more or less, formal joint pattern. Most exterior walls now stuccoed. Projecting stone lintels, keystones and voussoirs. All sills, girders, joists, and rafters are yellow pine.

Porches: One-story front porch, lavishly decorated in wood with corbeled cornices, arches, balustrade, columns, jig-saw cut-outs, displaying the art of skilled millwork and carpentry. Yellow pine floors, cut-stone approach steps. Deck type, metal roofs; space under porches to grade enclosed with wood lattice. Side porch similar; joined with two-story rear porch with posts and balustrade milled to simpler detail.

Chimneys and Fireplaces: No fireplaces; flues with thimbles for stove pipe connection in all rooms.

Doorways and Doors: Deep reveal with paneled jambs, back band trim; 4-panel doors with vertical center rail; all walnut.

Windows: Principal windows, round arched, double hung; shaded with small scale accordion shutters in tiers on inside and hinged louvered shutters on exterior. Staff moulds embellished with rope design. Bay window, first story, east side.

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TEX-3150

Page 4

Roof: Concave Mansard, wood shingle to pattern with ornamented segmented arched dormers, surmounted by wood and metal cornice, and ornamental cast iron cresting. Flat roof areas are metal. Sheet metal roof over service wing about 4 in 12 pitch,

Cornice: Projects about 2'-0"; supported by ornamental wood brackets and modillions. Belt course at second floor.

INTERIOR

Floor Plan: Two-story with attic, L-shaped; first floor about 3'-6" above grade; ceiling height 13'-0" on both stories and 11'-0" on both stories of service wing. A central stair hall extends from front porch to rear porch. On the first floor, the parlor and Mr. Steves' office were on one side, the sitting room and dining room on the other. The kitchen and pantry area was in the rectangular service wing added to the main rectangle at the rear of the house. On the second floor, there were four bedrooms, each with their own marble topped lavatories with cabinet units under, and one bath room; all opening onto the stair hall.

Flooring: 1x5 T&G yellow pine.

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Plaster on masonry exterior walls, or on wood lath on interior partitions; ornamental plaster cornices and ceiling rosettes; fresco painting on parlor ceiling.

Doors: Interior doors, 4-panel walnut with vertical center rail. Some doors arched and the upper panels filled with etched glass, raised moulding stops.

Trim: 5" wide walnut back band; 12" high walnut base; wood picture mould in all rooms and wainscot cap in stair halls; all milled to fine detail.

Stairway: Ornamentally moulded and paneled octagonal newel post surmounted with statuary in armor. Hardwood banister with turned balusters, open string.

Partitions: Wood stud, plastered both sides; major partitions furred to a thickness of 15" to 18" on first floor.

Hardware: Mortice and rim locks with brown porcelain knobs.

Lighting: Originally gas; now wired for electricity.

Heating: Wood burning stoves.

OUTBUILDINGS

A frame carriage house remains, although in poor condition. A cistern, once used to capture and store rain water from the metal roofs, has been removed.

Much in evidence, at this time, is the one-story "River Haus" or natatorium, measuring 36' x 75', built about 1900, on the banks of the San Antonio River, which borders the property along the rear.

The depressed swimming pool, which was lined with white glazed tile, has been floored over, and this building is now a popular rendezvous for small gatherings. The original dressing rooms are now service areas.

SITE

The house is located on the corner of King William and Johnson Streets, faces southeast, and is situated comfortably away from the street. The original 4' high round spindle picket fence, put together without nails, still borders the spacious grounds on the street sides.

The front yard was graced with a circular fountain with ornamental lead figures in the center, tropical plants and flowers in beds divided by brick-edged graveled walks. Many vestiges of the beauty of the original garden remain.

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TEX-3150

Page 6

Prepared by,

Marvin Eickenroht

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September 1963

APPROVED: *Charles S. Pope*
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